Department of Nutrition and Dietetics,
University of North Florida

NUTRI NEWS

It's a New Year!

Can you keep your resolution?

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January

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Student Spotlight

This month, I sat down with Brianna Ballard who is a extremely active nutrition student that is out to make a positive impact around campus! Please enjoy her insight on the different clubs around campus and what can be offered from Healthy Ospreys!

SB: What made you choose the nutrition program at the University of North Florida?

BB: UNF was my first and only choice. I went to school in Florida and wanted to stay in Florida for financial aid but Jacksonville called me! I really like the diversity and variety Jacksonville has to offer. From the beach to the Westside is a dramatic change in culture which makes the city so unique. UNF has an amazing nutrition program and I am proud to be apart of it!

SB: I know you are heavily involved with the Healthy Osprey program here on campus. Can you explain a little about what you do on a daily basis and what the goal for the program is?

BB: so daily basis I never really have a typical day that's always the same The department of health promotion offers several different services. So that means sometimes I test people for HIV or I promote healthy behaviors at market day or other out reach events. We do a lot of event planning such as health fairs cooking demos and fun interactive healthy events to increase health behaviors. Healthy osprey stems from the department of health promotions. Healthy Osprey is a collaboration of students faculty and staff to promote healthy lifestyle behaviors for the entire university. That really is the goal behind healthy osprey.

SB: Do you have any specific events you're excited for during the spring semester?

BB: I am always excited about upcoming events. For January we are focusing on physical movement. We are hosting a group fitness class in the field house call "Let's Get Physical". We also will be kicking off a new program called The healthy Osprey Advocates which is a program where peer educators have one on one sessions with students to create a health plan to achieve their goals. In February we will have love week which is a whole week full of events to celebrate body image and sexual health. This includes a fashion show and yoga session. The month of March we are focusing on nutrition and will have a health fair and several cooking demos to support healthy eating.

SB: What other extra curricular activities do you take part in around campus?

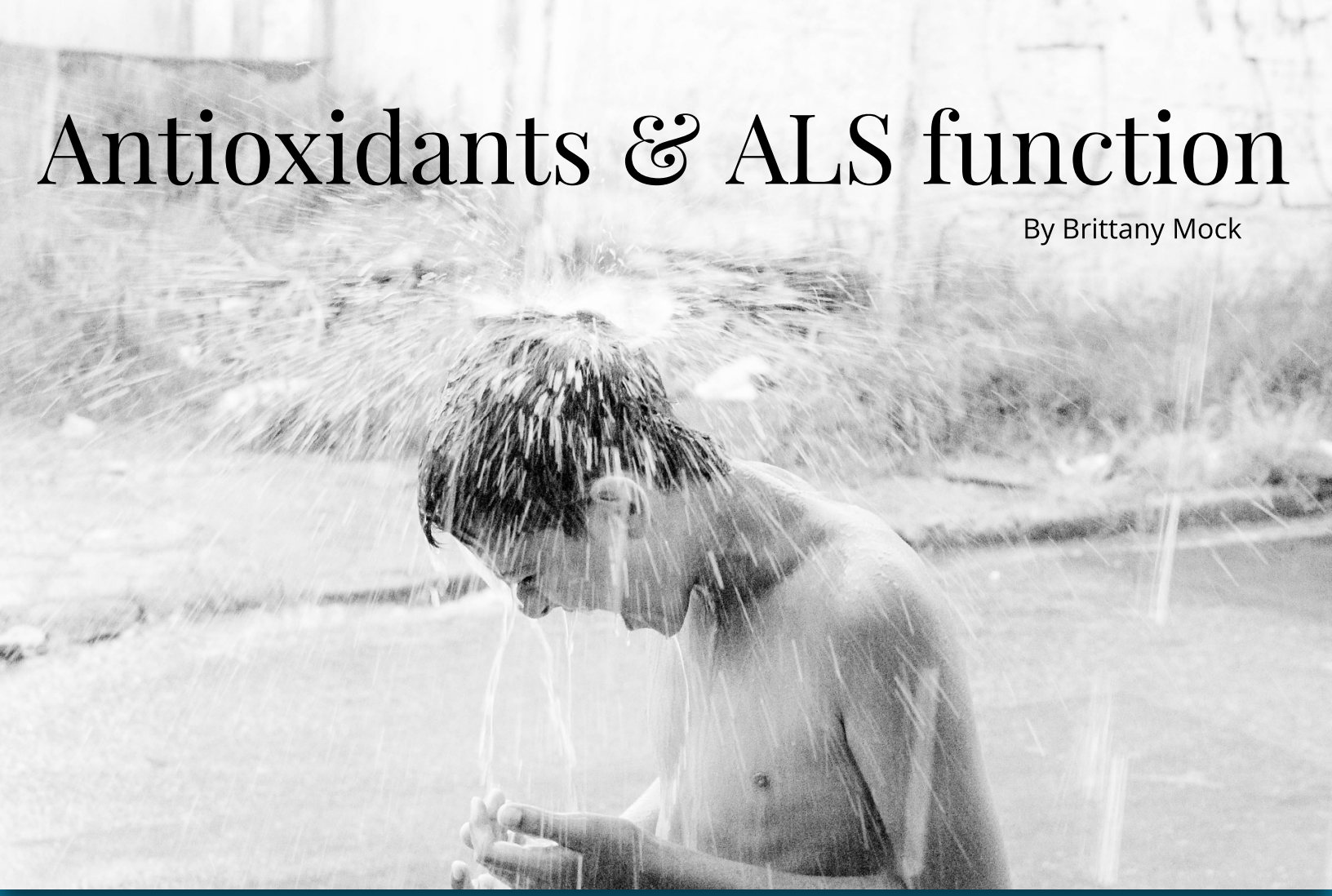
BB: I am apart of the UNF Sailing Club where we sail on the St. Johns River in lasers and 420's. I also teach cycling on campus for group fitness classes. I am the president of help you aspirate club as well as president of the food fighters club. Foo Fighters is a new club we just started this year to promote food sustainability. We take leftovers from the café as well as surrounding grocery stores we played them and then serve them to the hungry people of Jacksonville.

SB: What is the best advice you have received while attending UNF that you will carry on with you throughout your career?

BB: The best advice I received was understanding that nutrition and dietetics is more than just food, it's a way of life, a habit, and comfort. People either eat to live or live to eat. Food is apart of everyone's life and we are there to help guide them to the best diet for them.

Antioxidants & ALS function

By Brittany Mock



Remember the 2014 ice bucket challenge that brought millions together to raise awareness for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)? Well, the fight for research and awareness for ALS is still not over. ALS is a severe progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects the nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord, which eventually leads to atrophy, paralysis and respiratory failure. There is no cure for the disease, yet. However, scientists are beginning to learn much more about ALS, and this will help us further understand the disease so we can find a cure or key preventative measure. ALS usually strikes between the ages of 40 and 70, and at any given time the number of people with ALS can be around 20,000. Based on U.S. population studies, a little over 6,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with ALS each year. This is about 15 diagnoses every day! ALS seems to affect men slightly more than women with a 1.6:1 ratio. With no known cure and only one FDA approved treatment on the market, Riluzole, the life expectancy of a person diagnosed with ALS is about two to five years following a diagnosis. Some people can and have lived up to 10 years after a diagnosis, however. With sudden interest in the pathogenesis of this disease, scientists are becoming more interested in the role that nutrition can play in the progression and treatment of ALS. Patients who are diagnosed with ALS can benefit greatly from these studies and learn how to improve their lives and every day functions. Recently, data from a study of ALS progression was collected to examine associations between nutritional intake, function and respiratory function at the time of study entry for patients who had ALS symptoms. Jeri W. Nieves, PhD and coauthors, recently conducted this cross-sectional analysis of a

multicenter cohort that involved 302 patients with ALS. Patents diagnosed with ALS less than 18 months after symptom onset were recruited to participate. This is one of the only studies done with participants who were diagnosed at such a short time before the study. A revised food frequency questionnaire was used to obtain data on the nutrient intakes of the participants. Results showed that antioxidants, carotenes, fruits, and vegetables were associated with higher ALS function at baseline, by regression of nutrient indices and weighted quantile sum regression analysis. Weighted quantile sum regression allows an analysis of a combination of nutrients rather than the typical evaluation of single nutrients, so this method is preferred. This

study concluded that antioxidant nutrients, foods high in carotenoids and fiber, and vegetable intake are associated with better ALS function using two different analysis methods. So what exactly does this mean? This is good news! These findings can lead to better care for people with ALS. We can conclude that nutritional care of the patient with ALS should involve promotion of foods high in antioxidants and carotenes, including fruits and vegetables. It is important to keep in mind that this study only proves a correlation, not cause and effect. However, the sample size was quite large and adds strength to the results and conclusion. Many more studies need to be done on this subject in order to better understand it. As of right now, we are aware of the health benefits of various antioxidants for many diseases, and now that list of diseases includes ALS.

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High Protein Diet May Not Improve Insulin Sensitivity

By: Arlo Taylor

The use of protein to increase protein synthesis and decrease hunger is commonly used among many people, especially strength athletes. Protein does help prevent muscle loss and promote weight loss but according to certain studies, there is an effect in high protein intake that may do the opposite of what many people believe to do. A study in Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis found that eating too much protein has a negative effect on insulin sensitivity. This is not good for diabetes risk!

This study tested 34 post-menopausal women with obesity (a risk factor for diabetes) for their insulin sensitivity levels. The scientists found that women who lost weight on a high protein diet had no changes in their insulin sensitivity while women who had less protein had a significant improvement in insulin sensitivity. In many overweight/obese people, their insulin does not properly manage blood sugar levels resulting is diabetes.1

The reason this happens is not 100% clear but the same results were found in another study done by Gordon Smith, et al. A high protein diet had a larger decline in lean tissue mass but did not have a positive change in metabolic functions. In a lower protein diet, a positive effect on muscle insulin sensitivity was seen which is very important for men and women who are at risk of type II diabetes.

In a healthy individual, this may not be as important but as a clinical dietitian, it shows that a focus on macronutrient composition for patient weight loss is important. The positive effect on insulin sensitivity for overweight/obese patients is just as important as the weight loss. Again, the mechanism for the lack of improvement of insulin sensitivity in a high protein diet is not clear but the results show that being aware of macronutrient composition is necessary for weight loss patients.2

In a normal individual, this may not affect them but for overweight and obese individuals, this can significantly improve their health. As a future dietitian, it is important to understand that there will be all kinds of patients with different diseases and disorders. Using different ratios of macronutrients can be a helpful tool to positively change certain metabolic functions.

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Thirsty?

By: Kea Schwarz

Water, a solvent for biochemical reactions, has so many different physical properties and is so important for life. Water is the largest single constituent in the human body. It is essential in the absorption of metabolic heat in the body. It also, maintains vascular volume and aids in moving nutrients and wastes though the body. Water intake must be balanced with water loss on a daily basis in order to maintain a level of total body water. Total water intake consists of drinking water, the water in other beverages, and water in foods. Water deficits make it difficult to maintain homeostasis during perturbations and may have a negative effect on health. In an opposite but equal case, overconsumption of water and low sodium intake will lead to an excess of body water, resulting in hyponatremia and cellular edema.1

Either way too much or too little can have negative impacts on health. Despite the importance of proper water intake, there is still much confusion among the general public and most health care providers on the amount of water that should be consumed. This is because there hasn't been sufficient evidence to support water intake recommendations as a means to reduce the risk for diseases. Instead, an Adequate Intake (AI) for total water intake was set in order to prevent acute dehydration which includes abnormal body and metabolic functioning. The AI was set based on the median total water intake from US survey data. From these surveys arose what is now considered the standard of 8 glasses of water a day.1 However, everyone's needs are different and this is an important factor that shouldn't be left out of the equation.

In humans, consuming fluids to replenish losses and satiate the thirst sensation that is generally partnered with dehydration is a natural process. The amount of liquid consumed usually matches up with the body's deficit. This amazing bodily feat is still puzzling researchers. Recent evidence suggests that it has something to do with a natural swallowing inhibition. This proposal was tested by having participants rate their effort of swallowing while measuring regional brain responses when they were thirsty and after they had overdrunk. There was unwavering support for swallowing inhibition based on the effort rating recorded. There was a threefold increase in effort after overdrinking water, but addition of 8% sucrose to the water had a minimal effect on the effort before and after the participant had overdrank.2 It became increasingly difficult for the participants to swallow the more they drank, and the motor cortex that controls swallowing has to work harder in order for them to swallow. This didn't happen when the participant were comfortable drinking and rated the experience as pleasant. These findings therefore consistently show a presence of swallowing inhibition after an excess of water has been consumed. This mechanism is thought to help regulate the overall fluid take in humans.3

The take home from all this is to forget the strict regimen of drinking a set amount of water every day. Instead, drink when you're thirsty. Your body is smarter than you think and is good at maintaining balance if you listen to it.

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ARE YOU EATING ENOUGH CHOCOLATE?

By: Candace Gilbert

Chocolate is made from the pods harvested from the Theobroma Cacao tree. Theobroma is literally translated from Latin meaning, "*cocoa, food for the gods*". It takes a bit of work to turn cocoa seed pods into delicious chocolate, starting with the careful process of removing the beans from the pods along with the white, sticky mucilage. Once this has been accomplished, the beans and mucilage are fermented underneath banana leaves for 5-7 days during which time they are rotated often to ensure consistent fermentation and prevent black spots. This allows the flavors and aroma to develop and removes most of the tannins in the cocoa bean. The beans are then dried for another 5-7 days to stop the fermentation process and further develop the flavor of the cocoa before being bagged and tagged and shipped off to factories. At the factory, the beans are broken open and the inside pulp is removed. This is called the cocoa nib and it is roasted before being ground into cocoa liquor. At this point, it is ready for use or can be further refined into cocoa butter and cocoa powder1,2.

Cocoa and chocolate have a long history, dating back over 4000 years and belief in its medicinal qualities has always been asserted. During the first millennia AD, the Mayans used it as currency and worshipped the chocolate gods, even having special serving utensils for the sacred drink. In the 16th century the Spanish were convinced it was a magical potion1. Chocolate does contain protein, which may lend credence to the credit given for increased stamina. It also contains a variety of vitamins and minerals including vitamins A, B1, B--2, B6, niacin, calcium, iodine, iron, potassium, magnesium, sodium, and phosphorus1,3.

In more recent history, polyphenols, the same antioxidant compounds found in some fruits and vegetables, coffee, tea, and red wine, have been

found in high concentrations in chocolate, or more specifically, cocoa. The main polyphenols are the flavanols, one which has been studied quite extensively is epicatechin, a variant of which is found in green tea. Evidence has

demonstrated it may be responsible for the beneficial effects on disease prevention. One meta-analysis published by the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition showed improvements to several cardiovascular disease risk factors with short term chronic use of ≤18 weeks of chocolate, cocoa, and/or other cocoa flavanols3.

A review of 19 controlled trials involving 1131 subjects using either cocoa flavanols or a placebo discovered lowered triglycerides, increased good cholesterol, and reduced inflammation and blood sugar3. The reasoning behind this, according to an adjunct professor of nutrition and food sciences at Louisiana State University, is the flavanols may fight off the inflammation linked to CVD and diabetes. He recommends taking the cocoa through supplements to avoid the addition of sugar that usually accompanies cocoa in products. He claims to eat 2 tablespoons of cocoa with his oatmeal every day, though, having tried it just for fun, I do not personally recommend this vehicle of administration4.

What these studies all had in common was not that the evidence disputed the hypothesis of cocoa's health benefits, rather it is the inability to come up with a recommended therapeutic daily dose of chocolate. Such a shame there will not be an addition to the My Plate diagram any time soon. However, there are some good rules of thumb to follow before stocking up on chocolate coated flavanols: The darker the better. You are looking for anything greater than 60% cocoa. Make sure it is made with cocoa butter and not coconut or palm oil or anything hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated5. It is the cocoa solids (cocoa liquor and cocoa powder) you are looking at that have the high concentrations of flavanols and the darker the chocolate, the more solids, less butter, sugar, and milk it contains2,3,5. White chocolate contains no solids, only cocoa butter and milk. Milk chocolate is also much lower than dark chocolate but milk binds to the antioxidants rendering them unavailable. This means don't drink milk with your double chocolate chunk cookies if want to claim any benefit either5. Certainly, think quality over quantity for maximizing the benefits without counteracting them with added sugar and fat. Dark chocolate is also higher in calories so you want to factor that in as well. Most importantly, when you are eating chocolate to better your cardiovascular health, along with all the other potential benefits, and reflecting on the many cultures before you that have enjoyed this delectable treat, you should be mindful and savor the experience.

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READ IT AND WEEP:
Why Calorie Labeling in Fast Food Location isn't all it's cracked up to be

By: Jenna Wallace

Despite the Food and Drug Administration's best intents, calorie labeling in fast food chains isn't affecting the population the way we would hope. Although the labeling is intended to inform consumers of calorie content and help them making more informed nutrition decisions, it is ultimately ineffective in these endeavors. For the labeling to truly make an effect on the population there are some criteria that must be met. Consumers must desire a healthier lifestyle and must be knowledgeable amount proper daily calorie requirement[1]. This way, the labeling must shock them due to the disparity between what they assumed the caloric content was, and what it actually is[1]. Additionally, the labeling needs to be readily visible to consumers, meaning consumers must be made aware of it and it must specifically get to regular consumers of fast food[1].

As you may be able to see, there are clear issues with current fast food calorie labeling. Unfortunately, regular consumers of fast food are less likely to be concerned with a healthier lifestyle[1]. This is a clear contradiction in the requirements of success of this labeling. Beyond this initial issue, much of the labeling in fast food locations is not catching the eye of any consumer, as many consumers are unaware of the presence of calorie labeling[1]. Finally, there must be some level of shock or disgust when the consumer reads a label and notices the immense calories in, say a burger. However, since the FDA now requires these labels, as of December 1st, many chains have been encouraged to simply lower the calorie quantity of menu items[1]. While this may sound promising, this doesn't not mean that menu items are now healthier just because they have fewer calories.

In future legislature, new more adaptive techniques need to be put in place to help reduce obesity. Clearly, while with good intent, calorie labeling in fast food chains just isn't that effective. For the most part, when a consumer enters a fast food chain, they are looking for fast, cheap, and tasty, not healthy. One step in the right direction would be to put more regulations on the farms where these chains source their ingredients. Legislature is important in this aspect due to its wide-reaching effect.

As far as the consumer is concerned, the best approach is to become more educated. Consult a dietitan about how many calories you should be consuming per day. Make primarily healthy choices throughout the week, only relying on fast food locations as a last resort rather than a consistent ordeal. When at these locations, be an educated consumer and look or ask for calorie and nutrition information for the menu items. Try to choose the closest to real food on the menu as possible, with little processing. Through education, consumers can become more informed and make decisions that are healthier for themselves and their family.

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STUDENT CONCENTRATION COLUMN

Throughout the month of November and December, we reached out to students who currently are or were involved in the nutrition program (juniors, seniors, graduate students, and alumni). We interviewed them in order to get feedback on their thoughts of the program. It is completely anonymous! We would like to make this a regular feature for NutriNews, so if you are interested in being anonymously interviewed, feel free to reach out to Marla Morgan or Brittany Mock!

JUNIORS

Interview 1

You are a Junior, so what do you like about this program?

What I like about the nutrition program is that it is very well-developed. There are many opportunities available. The enthusiasm of my classmates and professors is really inspiring and is very conducive to learning the material better.

What has helped you succeed in the program thus far? Any advice?

My advice would be to study as much as you can. Find a friend, or study group that can help keep you on track. I had a few friends who helped me immensely throughout the semester, and I helped them too. We all balanced our strengths and weaknesses off each other. I would also recommend getting involved with the program and clubs more so you can feel more in the loop.

Is there anything in the program you wish to see?

I would like to see more students get involved in the extracurricular activities, such as SNDA and NJC. From what I saw, there weren't many juniors who attended these meetings and I'd really like to see more involvement. If more people were involved, the clubs would be a lot better!

Interview 2

You are a junior, so what do you like about this program?

I like that every class is directly connected and geared towards nutrition. After taking tons of prerequisites that were very vague and general, it's so nice to finally have classes geared towards my major completely. I also have met some really great professors who I can tell are passionate about nutrition and teaching

What has helped you succeed in the program thus far? Any advice?

Self motivation and getting things done ahead of time are the two major things that helped me survive my first semester in the program. My advice for anyone in the program or anyone planning to choose nutrition, is to take detailed notes in class and plan out the semester as soon as you get those syllabi. That way you can see where things might get hectic and plan ahead of time for smoother sailing. Also, it is so extremely important to take time for yourself in between the busy schedule of classes and work if you have it. Mental health is vital to college in general, especially in such a demanding major as
Nutrition.

Is there anything in the program you wish to see?

I really wish there were classes on sports nutrition incorporated into the curriculum. I think it's a large area of interest for many students, and it's a great way for future nutritionists to see the holistic approach that encompasses exercise and diet as means of "prescription". Nowadays, it's harder to isolate just nutrition or just exercise as protocol for treatment. Much of the time they are combined, and I think that should be evident in the curriculum. It would also be great to see more connection with the exercise science major at UNF, since that program and ours coincide.

Interview 3

As a junior, what do you like about this program?

Since starting the nutrition and dietetics program at UNF, I have truly enjoyed all of the classes I have taken. Some have been challenging but rewarding at the end. It's truly exciting to study something that you love and to connect the science behind that certain phenomenon. In this program, the department offers research opportunities to get true hands on experience in the field of nutrition. I look forward to working with professors in my junior year to challenge my critical thinking and to allow me to grow as a student.

What has helped you succeed in the program thus far? Any advice?

What has helped me to succeed so far is to study material ahead of time. Once you go to class, the material becomes easier to absorb. If I don't understand a certain concept, I'll go to a professor's office hours to receive clarification on a topic that is challenging. This always helps me! In addition, it's super beneficial to form study groups with your classmates so you can also learn the material better.

Is there anything in the program you wish to see?

So far I have really enjoyed what the program has to offer. I look forward to the many opportunities to come in my junior and senior year.

SENIORS

Interview 1

You are a senior, so what do you like about this program?

I am a senior in the program and I love that our major is like a family. I know all of my classmates and I know that all my teachers genuinely care about my education. This is a competitive major to be in, however I feel that we are all very supportive and helpful to one another. I also enjoy that we all have the common interest of nutrition, but are so diverse in our goals and dream about what we will do with our education.

What has helped you succeed in the program thus far? Any advice?

As a senior, I would advise the juniors and anyone who is entering the program to get to know the instructors and professors. They all have a variety of knowledge and expertise and are interested in helping you achieve your goals. Take volunteer opportunities, but do not take on more than you can handle! Though it is a competitive major and the internship aspect makes it stressful, remember why you love nutrition and enjoy learning and volunteering in this field.

Is there anything in the program you wish to see?

I have noticed that this program is constantly working on improving. Therefore, I suggest continuing to give students assignments that are creative and "outside of the box." For example, I like knowing that I have given a grocery store tour and this gives me an advantage in the field since other universities and colleges may not provide this opportunity to their students for class credit. I enjoy in class opportunities to collaborate with my instructor and classmates; therefore I like when we have classes that are part lecture and part group/class assignments; this is very helpful and beneficial.

Interview 2

You are a senior, so what do you like about this program?

I am an undergraduate in the program and will be graduating in Spring 2017. I love that the program is so hands-on focused and the professors seem to really care about the students.

What has helped you succeed in the program thus far? Any advice?

I didn't really know people that had graduated from the program or were seniors until I was I senior myself. By then I had already realized what my strengths were and where I needed to improve. However, I can say that every professor (graduate and undergrad professors) have always been welcoming and encouraging towards students coming to office hours. I loved this because it really allowed me to ask questions on how to better improve myself as a student i.e. become more marketable towards the competitive internship!

Is there anything in the program you wish to see?

The program great as it is but it could use improvement. Before transferring to UNF, I had earned an associate's degree where many of my classes were clinical nutrition based and had plenty of experience writing menus, using the diabetic exchange lists, and how to apply nutrition to medical conditions. This past semester, I felt well prepared for the menu assignments in MNT and food management. However, many of my peers were not. I became stressed listening to how much they were stressed. Before senior year, the diabetic exchange list is only mentioned and described, but there aren't any assignments or lessons that emphasize how to implement it at UNF.

With increasing rates of childhood obesity and more employers preferring RDs to have experience in teaching patients how to eat for their diabetes, it is important that we graduate with confident knowledge about the exchange lists. Exposing students to case study material and health disease impacted by nutrition (MNT) should begin before senior year. The most common thoughts that seniors had were along the lines of "We are about the graduate and I don't even know how to write a menu?!" "How are we going to become clinical RDs if half of us aren't even aware of what these diseases are?"

During Advanced Nutrition, I loved how the material proved why nutrition is essential. With such important information students should be given more opportunities for exposure to ensure that the material is repeatedly understood and learned. During Advanced Nutrition 1 and 2 there was so much information, I don't feel like I actually learned, even though I passed both classes. Instead of Advanced Nutrition 1 and 2, what if we had four separate classes focusing on 1) Study of Mineral toxicities and RDA guidelines, 2) Study of Vitamin toxicities and RDA guidelines, 3) Mechanisms of Carbohydrates and cholesterol, 4) Mechanisms of Proteins and Fats.

Food Fundamentals was a splendidly fun class but I felt that it was the exact same class as Food Science. I would prefer to only have food science since it repeats a lot of the same information that was in Food Fundamentals. Then, UNF could make more in-depth cooking labs (One of my favorite parts! Thanks for having this!) and the semester's credit hours would still have room for the "new proposed Advanced Nutrition make over." I have compared UNF's program to other universities and found that UNF has more cooking lab courses than most other universities and less science classes or "toxicology of nutrient" courses.

ALUMNI

You are an alumni, so what did you like about the program?

I am an alumna, graduating class spring 16'. In regards to the undergraduate program, I liked that the instructors were all so helpful and were available for help for students. They did not hesitate to provide help and answer questions regarding school work. They also were happy to provide advice and guidance to help us succeed during our career at UNF and to prepare us for achieving our goals after graduation. I am not in the graduate program. I was lucky to have such a supportive graduating class that wanted each other to succeed.

What has helped you succeed in the program thus far? Any advice?

I always updated my planner and phone with reminders of due dates for assignments. I refer to my planner every day to see my schedule in a two-week period to prepare myself to finish assignments and prepare for meetings or volunteer work. It is best to always be aware of your schedule at all times! Do not wait for the night before to study or complete assignments. Dedicate study time and completing assignments a few days ahead at least. This will allow time for instructors to answer any questions you may have, and there will be questions that will arise during studying or completing assignments. Turn on your blackboard and email notifications on your phone to receive immediate information regarding courses so you do not miss any information that is time sensitive! Having a network of school friends is really supportive. Get classmates' phone numbers!

Is there anything in the program you wish to see?

I wish that the program provided the capstone class earlier than the start of senior year to help students to really start looking into their possibilities for after graduating. Capstone had me ask a lot of questions about internships and job opportunities. This class is one of the most important classes for me because it provided a lot of information about what to do after graduating in order to successfully match into an internship or obtain a job. Taking this class earlier during my career at UNF would have allowed me to better prepare myself for building my resume for internships or job opportunities.

That being said, try to look ahead for job or internship possibilities for after you graduate as soon as possible. Do not wait until senior year to start to decide what path you should take after graduation. This will allow you to get as much volunteer work or other experiences under your belt for that desired internship or job after graduation. This will also allow time for instructors to provide guidance and answer questions you may have to match successfully with an internship or land that job. This advice may sound obvious, but it is easy to put off deciding what to do for post grad life until senior year because of trying to make it through classes with an A.

GRADUATE STUDENT/ UNDERGRAD ALUMNI

You are a graduate student in the program, what did you like about the undergraduate program and what do you like about the graduate program?

I am a student in the combined MS/DI program. I received my B.S. in Nutrition & Dietetics from UNF this past Spring. I really enjoyed the undergraduate program and felt that it was a very supportive environment. All the staff were very encouraging and interested in the students' progress and pursuits in the field. I liked that they took an interest in their students. I also liked the balance of the courses in our program, compared to other dietetics programs. I was surprised to learn other undergraduate programs, for example, do not offer an undergraduate course in research and ethics. Our graduate program is rigorous and certainly requires a lot of self-discipline, but I like that it challenges me. The graduate program has knocked me out of my comfort zone and forced me to reassess my habits in order to get back to meeting my own standards. The undergraduate program kept me busy, but I was still able to juggle work and volunteer projects. The graduate program gives you the flexibility of setting your own hours since the classes are hybrid and mostly online. So, you are working around your internship and meeting only once a week on campus.

What has helped you succeed in the program thus far? Any advice?

You definitely have to have a passion for what you're doing because I'm not going to lie: there are some really difficult days when everything just becomes overwhelming and sometimes you feel like an imposter. But it's part of the growing process and you remind yourself of where you were only two years ago! You don't really reach success by yourself. I wouldn't have made it this far without a select few friends to keep me going; two rock star fellow interns to study with and keep me motivated via group texts at all hours of the night; and those people you have to network with at your internships: those people are gold because they've already been through this and can tell you what comes next!

I would tell any undergraduate student the biggest favor they could do for themselves is to network, network, network. Go to every conference you possibly can, even if you have to volunteer for a day to get there. Once you're there, meet everybody you can. You never know the friendships you will make, and where those paths will lead. I have met dietitians all over the state because of the conferences and workshops I've attended, and you learn so much from one another!

Otherwise, just do not stop learning. Keep the drive because it literally never stops.

Is there anything in the program you wish to see?

I felt the undergraduate program could benefit students more if it encouraged them to work more independently. The program is very concentrated on group presentations and projects that rely heavily on team effort, and while those assignments are important for learning how to work in an environment that demands a collaborative effort, the reality is that once you get to graduate school, you are completely on your own. Your grade is not going to depend on others; it will reflect only the critical thinking, effort, and time that you have put forth. Because our program is combined with an internship, you have to get very creative about how you're going to spend the time you have. If you don't learn time management skills at the undergraduate level, you are going to struggle at the graduate level.

Some of the undergraduate courses would also benefit the students more if they were constantly evolving. Students have benefited most from the classes in which the professors responded to student feedback and either changed something in the technique or structure of the course, or even considered alternative assignments. Whatever the outcome, when a professor takes that extra time to ensure the lesson ultimately sticks, the students not only feel heard, but supported in their academic pursuits. The curriculum listed in a syllabus from two years ago may no longer speak to students today, so it is important for professors to stay open and consider the different learning styles of their students.

When I was an undergraduate student I had mentioned MNT should have a practical component to it and I still think that should be the case. As our field is moving towards nutrition-focused physical assessments, there are many things that could be taught in class with more interaction: basic concepts in physical exams; auscultation; even a few classes about menu planning with suitable software; perhaps even a glucometer for some type of diabetes lab. Although the RD would not be doing the blood glucose check in the hospital, students should still be familiar with these concepts and know how they are performed and what the readings mean. Any exposure before the internship would greatly benefit the students.

THE ORANGE-FLESHED SWEET POTATO CHANGING THE GAME IN TACKLING MALNUTRITION

By: Malarie Warren

Child malnutrition is a global issue that doesn't receive nearly as much media attention as other epidemics like Ebola and Zika. Something unique about this dilemma is that the western world has an abundance of resources that could contribute to the abolishment of said issue. According to the World Food Project, "Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest *prevalence* of hunger. One person in four there in undernourished... Poor nutrition causes 45% of deaths in children under five"[1]. Researchers in Uganda have been researching traditional methods of biofortification to increase levels of vitamin A in sweet potatoes, a staple in many Ugandan households. Children who suffer from Vitamin A deficiency may suffer from blindness, stunted growth, a host of diseases and mortality[2]. This problem has been addressed before but implementation of efforts to dissolve the problem has been either unsustainable or controversial. Although the sweet potato is commonly eaten among Ugandans, it is often the white potato variety that is more firm, more starchy, and contains less Vitamin A. Dr. Robert Mwanga is a Ugandan researcher that developed the new fortified sweet potato variety and he stresses the importance of marketing the health and agricultural benefits of the new variety if vital to its success because this sweet potato is not native to Africa. Because it decreases the occurrence of vitamin A deficiency in the community, mortality decreases while overall health has been shown to increase. Dr. Mwanga recently received his quarter of a $250,000 World Food Prize for his work because this product is sustainable, often yields more than the region's traditional sweet potato, and is highly effective in providing sufficient Vitamin A[2]. Farmers are able to feed their family and sell the remaining yield to the community, increasing their communities' economic success. Dr. Mwanga has seen this orang-fleshed sweet potato thrive with farmers in Uganda and hope that it will continue to spread in popularity among the farmers and their communities and eventually spread to the rest of the continent.

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Scientists Find No Link Between Appetite, Calorie Intake

By: Michelle Wolff

With obesity on the rise, it's no surprise that the food industry strives to make foods that cater to those looking to lose weight. These so called "appetite suppressers" claim to subdue appetite for a long time and in turn cause one to eat less throughout the day. Scientists from the University of Sheffield went on to test this theory by looking at 462 studies that compared calorie intake with appetite rating and found very contradicting results.

Dr. Bernard Corfe, who led the study, worked with colleagues to compile data from the studies to determine the efficacy of these foods and their impact on appetite. The studies used appetite rating to measure energy intake (EI), however the reliability of EI has not yet been reviewed, and therefore is not completely dependable. The studies used both quantified appetite ratings and EI. The direct statistical comparison between the endpoints, intervention type and study population were also recorded.

After thoroughly comparing various studies, they found that appetite scores did not correspond with EI in 51.3% of the studies and only 6% of them even tested for a direct statistical comparison between calorie intake and appetite. Even more so, of that 6%, only around half could find a direct link. They found that any relationship between EI and appetite was independent of study type stratification by age, gender or sample size and that the self-reported appetite ratings did not accurately predict EI. With that being said, there was no strong relationship showing that the amount of calories eaten effects ones appetite. Although some of the foods did show to suppress appetite for a long period of time, the excess calories were often consumed later on in the day.

Dr. Bernard Corfe stated that much more research needs to be done to define the factors that directly influence food intake which could include things such as sensorial environment, social factors, entrained behavior relating to food timing, along with our innate physical regulation of intake. Thus, they concluded that self-reported appetite ratings of appetite do not reliably predict EI and one should be careful if they are using self-reported appetite scores to predict EI.

Further research on this topic is going to be a necessary step in working towards curing the rising obesity rate, which is now at the highest it has ever been. Further findings may help us understand why obesity occurs for other reasons then excess energy intake and how to prevent it. Once there is solid data, then the food industry can work to produce foods that efficiently satisfy ones appetite for long periods of time, with no late night binges. Once this happens, we can expect to see a decrease in obesity as well as a decrease in many obesity driven diseases.

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What An Alkaline Diet Can–And Can't–Do For Your Health: The truth about the buzzy pH-based diet

By: Shannon McCarthy

PH is a measurement of how acidic or basic a substance is. 7 is neutral, anything below is acidic, and anything above is basic (up to 14). Basic and alkaline mean the same thing and can be used synonymously. The pH of stomach acid is naturally 3.5 or lower and the reason for the alkaline diet is to maintain this number on the pH scale.[1] The western diet is full of acidic foods which cause an increase in the pH inside the stomach. The reasoning for most people to switch to eating an alkaline diet is to promote an alkaline pH in the body, optimizing the body's pH and supposedly riding the body of the negative health effects brought on by this acidic Western diet.[1] If the stomach pH is closer to this natural 3.5 then it is potentially beneficial to the body as a whole.

Categorizing foods as alkaline or acidic is based on how it effects urinary tract excretion. For example one my think that a lemon would be categorized as an acidic food but it is categorized as basic. Lemons are acidic foods but when they are broken down they give urine a basic pH, thus categorizing them as basic. The alkaline diet consists of foods like vegetables, fruits, grains, almonds, lentils and soy products.[2] For some this may be hard to maintain but others may already eat similar to this. Foods high in animal protein, dairy products and refined grains would need to be avoided.[3]

Benefits of an alkaline diet along with combating the high acidic Western diet is weight loss, decreased obesity and decreased cancer risk. There are many skeptics of the alkaline diet, they believe it could be beneficial to a persons health but not in the ways that it is advertised. Some say that an alkaline diet may increase the longevity of life and for others it is hard to believe this because there is little research to back claims like this up.[3] The thought process is that if a person is constantly eating acidic foods, like in the western diet, when does the body have time to do anything else besides just work on removing these foods to restore the natural pH. Therefore if alkaline foods are eaten and the pH does not drastically change, then the body has more time to work proficiently, which creates for a longer and healthier life.

So believer or skeptic, there needs to be more research completed to really prove this diet is beneficial to health.

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Research Spotlight: Jill M Snyder

By: Adriana Gonzalez

Nutrition plays a vital role in athletic performance. With increasing energy demands these individuals require sufficient fuel to help with performance and recovery. Due to rigorous demands in training, some athletes may experience disordered eating. According to *nationaleatingdisorders.org.*, although sports training offers tremendous benefits, the pressures of athletic competition increases the risks of obtaining disordered eating for both males and females. In fact, in a study conducted on division one NCAA female athletes, researchers found that 1/3 of these individuals were at an increased risk of developing anorexia nervosa (2016). According to eatrightpro.org., eating disorders are considered a biological based mental illness (2016). Often these individuals are resistant to treatment because they have anosognosia, which is a lack of awareness (eatrightpro, 2016). To treat eating disorders, a team of clinical psychologists and registered dietitians with an understanding of its psychological component is essential.

In the department of nutrition and dietetics, Jill M Snyder instructs classes such as Basic Principles of Human Nutrition, Life Span Nutrition and Nutrition Counseling and Communication. She received both her undergraduate and masters degree here at the University of North Florida (Go Ospreys!). For the past 14 years, Professor Synder has specialized in the treatment of eating disorders and sports nutrition. In this time she worked as a consultant dietitian for 8 years in a private practice. Growing up her father was a football coach from where she grew an interest in exercise science and sports nutrition. As she got closer to studying sports nutrition, she began to see a correlation between performance and disordered eating. In the private practice, working along side a therapist, she began to understand and learn the psychological standpoint behind disordered eating. She explained that about 95% of patients that came into the practice received treatment for eating disorders where she was able to create an outpatient program.

After working at the private practice, she began to work as an adjunct professor for the department of nutrition and dietetics and the University of North Florida. As of three years, she is now full-time faculty where she applies her experience and knowledge in both lecture and in research. During her time at UNF, she has worked closely with Dr. Yu as a nutrition practioner, where she was able to work as the lead dietitian in some of the intervention studies. As of recent, she just completed a study with Dr. Yu where they examined if a web-based treatment was as effective as a traditional face-to-face treatment in treating eating disorders. In this study about 20 participants were involved in 12-week cycles with the assistance of another dietitian and two therapists to determine the data. It will be very interesting to see the data of this study. Along with this study, she has helped Dr. Yu arrange nutritional surveys that was sent to the University of Florida population in determining how nutrition major students differ in disordered eating compared to other majors amongst campus. She discussed that nationally our profession has a higher prevalence of eating disorders than any other eating disorder. It will be very interesting to the data of this survey as well.

As we grow into our profession, it's important to understand that nutrition is correlated with many factors. As Professor Synder started with an interest in sports performance and nutrition, she started to also understand the psychological and behavioral aspect of nutrition that affects many of our population today. If any students are currently interested in eating disorders or sports nutrition, do not hesitate to stop by her office during office hours.

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